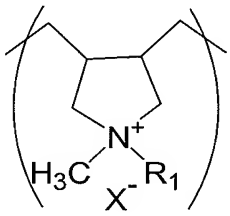
In the Claims

Please amend claims 1, 9, 19 and 22 as indicated below, and cancel claim 21. A complete listing of the claims pursuant to 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(c) follows:

1. (Currently amended) Water soluble branched block copolymers that comprise ~~consist of~~ polymeric backbone chains of quaternary ammonium units of general formula I



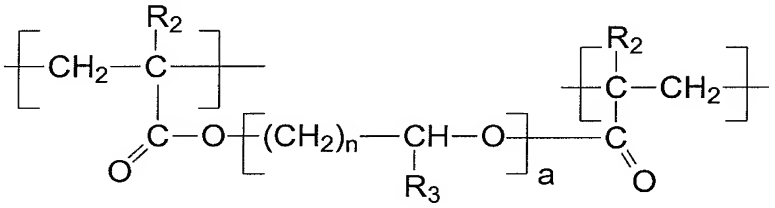
I

with

R_1 = H, alkyl (C_1-C_8)-

X^- = a counterion,

mutually linked together by poly(alkylene glycol) blocks, which comprise ~~consist of~~ units of general formula II



II

with

R_2 = H, methyl,

R_3 = H, methyl, ethyl,

n = 1 through 3, and

a = 6 through 100,

replacing individual units of general formula I in said backbone chains, and the proportion by mass of the units of general formula II is between 0.01 and 20 % by weight based on the total block copolymer.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously presented) A block copolymer in accordance with claim 1 wherein the intrinsic viscosity of the block copolymer is between 25 and 600 ml/g when measured in 1 N sodium chloride solution at 30 °C.

4. (Previously presented) A block copolymer in accordance with claim 3, wherein the intrinsic viscosity of the block copolymer is between 400 and 600 ml/g when measured in 1 N sodium chloride solution at 30 °C.

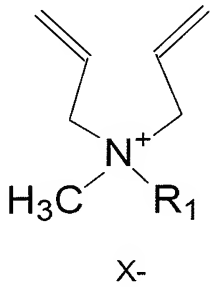
5. (Previously presented) A block copolymer in accordance with claim 1 wherein the Huggins constant is in the range between 0.3 and 0.5.

6. (Previously presented) A block copolymer in accordance with claim 1 wherein the polymeric backbone chain is derived, in the form of a unit of general formula I, from cyclic quaternary ammonium chlorides.

7. (Previously presented) A block copolymer in accordance with claim 1 wherein the poly(alkylene glycol) blocks are derived from compounds from the group of bis-acrylate esters or bis-methacrylate esters of poly(ethylene glycols), poly(propylene glycols), poly(butylene glycols), and/or polytetrahydrofurans.

8. (Previously presented) A block copolymer in accordance with claim 1 wherein the counterions X^- are selected from the group comprising chloride and methosulfate.

9. (Currently amended) A process for the preparation of water soluble branched block copolymers comprising ~~consisting of~~ the ~~[free]~~ radical polymerization of a quaternary diallylammonium compound of general formula III,



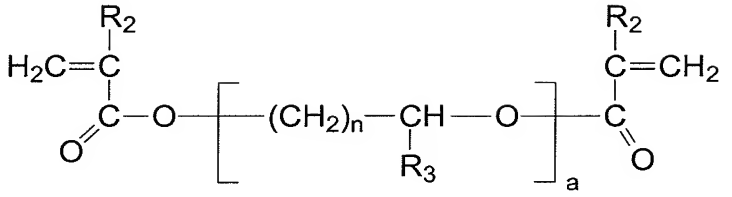
III

with

R_1 = H, alkyl (C_1-C_8)

X- = a counterion,

and bis-acrylate esters or bis-methacrylate esters of poly(alkylene glycols) of general formula IV,



IV

with

R_2 = H, methyl,

R_3 = H, methyl, ethyl,

n = 1 through 3, and

a = 6 through 100,

the proportion by mass of the compound of general formula IV amounting to between 0.01 and 20 % by weight based on the two starting compounds.

10. (Previously presented) A process in accordance with claim 9, wherein diallyldimethylammonium chloride is used as the diallylammonium compound.

11. (Previously presented) A process in accordance with claim 9 wherein compounds from the group of bis-acrylate esters or bis-methacrylate esters of poly(ethylene glycols), poly(propylene glycols), poly(butylene glycols), and/or polytetrahydrofurans are used as the poly(alkylene glycol).

12. (Previously presented) A process in accordance with claim 9 wherein, as the initiator, use is made of a water soluble azo compound, or a redox system comprising peroxodisulfates and an amine.

13. (Previously presented) A process in accordance with claim 12, wherein, as the initiator, use is made of a redox system comprising peroxodisulfates and an alkoxylated amine surfactant.

14. (Previously presented) A process in accordance with claim 9 wherein the poly(alkylene glycol) is added during polymerization of the quaternary diallylammonium compound within the 0 to 80 % range of extents of reaction either in the form of one shot, or in portions, or continuously.

15. (Previously presented) A process in accordance with claim 9 wherein the process takes place in aqueous solution.

16. (Previously presented) A process in accordance with claim 9 wherein the process takes place using an inverse emulsion procedure.

17-18. (Canceled)

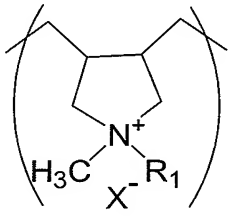
19. (Currently amended) A block copolymer in accordance with claim [[2]] 1 wherein the weight average molar mass of the block copolymer is greater than, or

equal to, 250,000 g/mol, and wherein the intrinsic viscosity of the block copolymer is between 25 and 600 ml/g when measured in 1 N sodium chloride solution at 30 °C.

20. (Previously presented) A block copolymer in accordance with claim 19 wherein the intrinsic viscosity of the block copolymer is between 400 and 600 ml/g when measured in 1 N sodium chloride solution at 30 °C.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Currently amended) A method for at least one of the manufacture of paper, the treatment of waste water, and the removal of water from sludge comprising ~~providing~~ adding to an aqueous system from which suspended solids have to be separated water soluble branched block copolymers that comprise ~~consist of~~ polymeric backbone chains of quaternary ammonium units of general formula I



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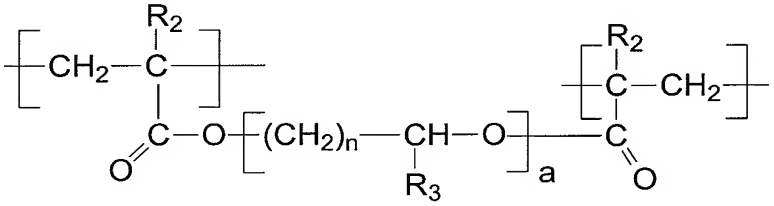

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